

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), the only congressional member from Southern California on the House Committee on Ways and Means, voted against the Oman Free Trade Agreement today citing labor right and port security concerns. The agreement, H.R. 5684, passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 221 to 205.

Below is an excerpt of the speech Rep. Becerra gave on the Floor today during debate of the Oman Free Trade Agreement:

“Mr Speaker, I hate to say it, but I think it’s become very obvious that our system for devising trade agreements so very important to this country’s functioning around the world, has not only broken, but is broken completely. Today, we have a trade regime, which has led to the largest trade deficits this country has ever experienced. The latest report is that the trade deficit for the month of May was almost \$64 billion. We purchased \$64 billion more in goods than we were able to sell to others around the world. We are on pace this year to have a trade deficit that is larger than \$800 billion. We’ve never faced that before, but we continue to put forward trade agreements like these that leave us naked to competition that is neither free nor fair.

“Today, Mr Speaker, you find that for every six ships that China sends laden with goods into this country, only one of those six ships returns to China with American goods in it for Chinese purchase. And we continue to bring forward trade deals like these that say simply this when it comes to protecting the rights of workers whether in this country or in the country that we’re reaching an agreement with: ‘enforce your own laws.’

“And even though we know in most cases, many of the countries, including Oman, do not have laws that protect their workers, which will mean that our workers will suffer as well, we continue to move forward with these agreements.

“Yet if you’re not convinced that these trade agreements and the regime itself now that we use is broken, look at the provision that was included in this agreement that allows a company that has substantial business activity in Oman to operate our ports.

“It is time for a change. We need a new direction when it comes to our trade policy. Not only for our workers, but for the health of our American companies that have to compete in this world where artificially other companies and other countries are gaining advantage over us because they are not following the rules. This is another example of why we should reject trade agreements that don’t protect America’s interests, whether security-wise or otherwise.”

Becerra.House.gov